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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Nominations for Ambassador's Refugee Fund 2005

REF: STATE 27113

1. Post is pleased to submit project proposals for PRM's Ambassador Refugee Fund. Projects were identified in consultation with UNHCR and others. Post is submitting a third project in the event that additional funding is available.

GRADAC COLLECTIVE CENTER KINDERGARTEN (USD 5000)

2. Background: For 2005, the GOC is implementing a "rationalization plan" for its refugee collective centers to reduce the number of centers around the country and centralize the inhabitants. Gradac Collective Center (GCC) will grow to more than 100 residents this year, making it the biggest refugee facility in the region.

Location Profile: Gradac is a small coastal village with approximately 2000 inhabitants. Residents at GCC will be predominately Bosnian Croat although some will be Bosniak, (exact figures are not yet known).

Recipient: Mi Split has successfully run a kindergarten in CC Split.

Project: GCC currently has no kindergarten, nor are children eligible to attend local schools or educational programs. Social workers have commented on the need in collective centers for activities encouraging socialization and development of interpersonal relations.

Use of Funds: Room repairs, purchase of chairs, tables and didactic materials. Funds would also support a teacher's salary for a few hours daily for 12 months. GOC's Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees has agreed to allow the kindergarten to operate in the facility.

Public Diplomacy: The project is a good public diplomacy opportunity to demonstrate USG support for refugees of all ethnicities.

PLASKI COMMUNITY LIBRARY (USD 5000)

3. Background: Plaski receives no significant funding from the GOC and remains a severely economically-depressed area. In the municipality of 2300 residents, there are only about 100 jobs; the majority of residents are unemployed.

Location Profile: Before the war Plaski was an ethnic Serb village of 4,000, although most left by the end of the conflict. Today the village of 2300 residents is equally divided between ethnic Serb returnees and mostly Bosnian Croat settlers. Relations between two ethnic communities have been tense since the war although there have been no significant conflicts. Recently the town made headlines when the local administration considered changing some street names honoring the Homeland War to Serb historical figures.

Recipient: Post would work directly with the library.

Project: In 2003, Plaski opened a small library/reading room with funding from the Ministry of Culture and the municipality. According to the Ministry, the library is one of the country's neediest, owning only 2945 titles. The library would like to create an exhibit space to attract and inform users about authors and their works, organize community activities, lectures, and readings.

Use of Funds: Two computers and printers (for public use and internet access), shelving for books and display items, and books. Post would purchase a combination of American authors and required school books.

Public Diplomacy: The project is an excellent opportunity to highlight USG's support for interethnic tolerance, cooperation, and community-building.

IF ADDITIONAL FUNDS EXIST: DONJI LAPAC PLAYROOM (USD 5000)

4. Background: The entire municipality of Lapac (354 square km, 2,300 inhabitants) previously had no functioning kindergartens until the Red Cross and Red Crescent established a playroom in 2003. The playroom is situated in a reconstructed building that was a destroyed high school. In 2004, the Norwegian Refugee

Council (NRC) financed the playroom but will discontinue funding in June 2005 for financial reasons. The playroom has proven able to fill the gap of a proper kindergarten.

Location Profile: Before the war, Donji Lapac was about 95% ethnic Serb. Most residents left during the conflict and the region was severely destroyed. The region is now a mixed community: an estimated 75% of the population is ethnic Serb while the remaining 25% is ethnic Croat (mostly Bosnian Croat settlers)

Recipient: Croatian Red Cross' branch office would supervise.

Project: As no kindergarten or playroom facility exists in the region, this facility serves as a valuable resource for the community. Currently 34 children are enrolled - 20 Croats (from settler families) and 14 Serbs (from returnee families). The playroom ethnic breakdown is the opposite to that of the ethnic structure in the Lapac municipality due to the fact that most Serb returnees are elderly and Bosnian Croat residents are usually young families.

Use of Funds: Funds would cover a teacher's salary to work part-time (four hours daily), including pension and health contributions. The current teacher is a social worker and has received praise from previous donors. The municipality pays for utility costs.

Public Diplomacy: Post would highlight its support for an underdeveloped, war-affected region.

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